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ABSTRACT

Based on the premise that the brain is a highly plastic, constantly changing entity that is powerfully shaped by experiences in childhood and throughout life, this book presents information on enriching childhood brain development. Each stage of childhood development is profiled, with the changes in the brain described and their implications for behavior, learning, and the child's growing abilities and interests. Chapter 1 presents information on brain structure and development, including research on enriched and deprived environments. Chapter 2 examines brain structure in detail, including human prenatal brain development, plasticity, and critical periods. Chapter 3 examines prenatal environmental influences on brain development. Chapter 4 discusses development from birth through age 2, focusing on brain development, temperament, and the impact of abuse or neglect. Chapter 5 describes brain development during the preschool years, highlighting opportunities for enrichment, including a controversial flash card method. Chapter 6 examines development in middle childhood, focusing on various types of intelligence and children's time use. Chapter 7 concerns brain development during adolescence, including the impact of various drugs and of sex differences. Chapters 3 through 7 include recommendations for enrichment activities, based on information from parent surveys. Chapter 8 provides suggestions for enrichment in the classroom. Chapter 9 discusses how social factors shape intellectual development and society's role in providing enrichment and preventing deprivation. A resource guide containing book titles, organization names, and other types of support for those wishing to create enrichment plans concludes the book. Each chapter contains reference notes. (KB)

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